There goes a saying that, 'Oil can never mix with water.' So, when I got accepted at one of the most prestigious University in the world along with ecstasy, excitement there were some qualms and with other worries this also peeked into my mind that, 'how I am going to adjust with the culture and habits of a group of people, completely unknown and possibly having much different traditions and way of life!' I have never been abroad. Though I am from a country which have people from different race, ethnicity, religious beliefs, food habits and even social structure it’s never very easy to live out of your country for the first time.

I am from a Hindu family in India and I belong to a caste which strictly follows certain rules and rituals. So while leaving home I was given a complete set of do’s and don’ts and a huge list of restrictions and most important among them was 'Stay away from Alcohol'! Somehow my elders were under the impression that Americans drink beer in place of water and all the food they eat are junk!! Thanks to Hollywood! So, yes, they were very suspicious about how I am going to survive staying inside the fence of the limitations bound on me!

So, when I got here the first Americans I had to interact with were the Immigration Officer and then security check and I was thinking, 'Come' on Man, They're Americans, they can be a little moody!'. But then when I reached here in East Lansing and then MSU day by day I was proven utterly wrong!

I saw glimpses of Lansing and MSU campus in pictures before but at the first look at the city I was amazed. I expected a crowded and noisy city and roads! But everything was so calm and soothing that I could not believe my eyes or ears! All the trees with coloured leaves, the boulevards, the clear blue sky; I fell in love with the place!

On the next day after reaching here I met my instructor for the Summer English Program. She greeted me so warmly and was talking to me in such a manner that it seemed that she was not seeing me for the first time, rather she knew me for a quite a while! I had to go through a few official procedures on
the first day and I did not know where to go, whom to talk to. She recued me and explained to me everything very evidently and even took me to the International Centre. Looking at that, I thought such a large office only for international students! Wow! Then when I went inside everyone so nice and everything was taken care of so easily, I contemplated no wonder international students like MSU a lot!

Then my idea of people changed also. Everyone around here carries a smile on their face and greets so warmly that it transcends a refreshing feeling into me. I never feel lonely or depressed even I am miles away from my home and my family. Earlier, it used to be really difficult for me to stay away from my family even when I am just in a different city. But MSU must have got some magic in the air that I didn’t feel bad for a single day! Everyone is so helpful and caring. I assume now, it’s not only the nice people around here. The International Centre, the University Authority and also the Spartan Village Community arranged a series of activities and through those I got to meet a whole bunch of new people, make new friends and spend real quality time along with others. It gets really hard to know the people around you when you are from different countries and belong to separate cultures but the programs were organized in such clever manner that I never felt that I don’t know the person next to me. It was so spontaneous and relaxing! Then all these events are so informative and yet so enjoyable!

By attending these programs I not only met new people but also got to know a lot about the American culture, history, traditions and even how they think. I tested good American food and beverages and I know that they don’t only drink beers! I used to play soccer and when I came here I went to watch a couple matches in the De-Martin stadium. I was surprised to see the atmosphere at the stadium. You can cheer the team in so nice fashion. In our country it always used to be meaningless screams and abuses. I have never been a big fan of American Football. That might be because I didn’t know how the game is played. But now through an event at the International Centre I not only know the rule of the game, I also got to know the student athletes. It is appreciable that the authority made an effort to bring the international students near the athletes and thus also the game. I think, if we live in a place we need to know what brings joy or sorrow to the fellow people. Sports is one of them and I think now the Spartan Spirit has gotten into me! There are also events which makes the
foreign students familiar to the local culture. I have learnt to love Halloween and homecoming. I have attended the local festivals in Lansing, the Jazz festival, the Great Lake festival and I found them so colourful and uplifting. I have seen with wonder how people who are completely stranger to each other dance together in the rhythm of music and look so happy. There's a common spirit in all of them which thrills me. I remember I spent hours talking to my parents how much I enjoyed these carnivals.

It's not that importance only bestowed upon the fact that we get to know the American traditions but our own religious or cultural celebrations are also considered with utmost significance. There's something for everyone; the India Night, Eid celebration, Japan Curry party, Korean festival; very conscious care has been taken to organize all these events successfully. There is also all sorts of arrangement to diminish the language barrier. There are so many language centres which offer help to people for communicating well with each other. Often people from a different country are not aware of certain rules or regulation and also facilities available. It's been made sure by various seminars that no one gets deceived.

There are also so many opportunities if we want to give something back to the society. A big number of voluntary organizations are active in the university and their activities are so productive and yet so full of fun! I am associated with one named ‘Science theatre’ and I get to do cool science projects to educate the children and at the same time cherish the joy of spending some beautiful time with these adorable kids! Besides all the people in these societies are so supportive and nice that it takes almost no time to blend in!

Then there are a couple of nice places to visit. I have always been a big admirer of the architecture of churches and the prayers are so inspirational that it takes away all the fatigue of body and mind. Now, I regularly attend the mass in my nearby Church and it literally makes my day. The Capitol building gives me a feeling of the strength of the constitution and political structure of this country and also I have been able to get a very clear overview of how everything works in here. Even the senate sessions are open to public so that the system remains transparent to people.

From my side, I too had to adopt myself a little bit. Though the language of communication is same even inside US people from different places have
different accents! So no wonder I had to encounter little bit of trouble to pick up everything initially and also my way of talking was not totally comprehensible to the local people. Too make it clearer I learnt to speak slowly and I also needed to know some trivia of the local dialect. Sometimes there is something which might sound correct grammatically and also to me but might bear entirely different meaning to someone else. But I got so much help from the assigned people that fortunately I have been able to avoid any embarrassing situation until now!

The things that strikes me most about the people of Lansing, is their honesty, simplicity, openness and caring attitude. I believe it as a blessing to have the chance to live in such a beautiful environment with such lovely people. Not to mention the very kind and proficient University Authority who takes such good care of everybody. I consider myself extremely fortunate and lucky to be a part of Michigan State University.

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Thank you ..

For letting me express my gratitude !!